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*Remarks of Dr. Linette Branham  
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*Before the Education Committee  
Raised Bill 6686  
An Act Concerning the Teacher Education and Mentoring Program*

*March 23, 2009*

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey and Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Linette Branham, and I'm an Education Issues Specialist for the Connecticut Education Association. This testimony is submitted in support of this important bill.

Although it is difficult to draw a direct, causal relationship between strong mentoring of a new teacher, teacher retention, and increased student achievement, there has been some research done to this effect. Studies conducted by the New Teacher Center at the University of Santa Cruz, California, have shown the following:

- ☐ 88% of new teachers remain in teaching after six years after participating in a support program that incorporates the key elements of effective induction;
- ☐ students taught by teachers who receive comprehensive induction support for two years demonstrate significantly greater learning gains; new teachers in these programs are about as effective as their more experienced peers, despite being assigned to classrooms with more challenging students;
- ☐ every **\$1.00** spent on high-quality induction provides a return on investment of **\$1.66** over a period of five years.



Research has also suggested that high-quality mentoring programs share common characteristics, including being a multi-year program, spanning at least the first two years of teaching, rigorous mentor selection criteria, initial training and on-going professional development and support for mentors, pairing of mentors and new teachers in the same grade levels and/or subject areas, and documentation and evidence of new teacher growth. In countries such as France, Germany, Japan, and China, which have strong mentor programs for new teachers, and teacher attrition is much less of a problem than in the United States, the conditions that contribute to the success of these programs include:

- ☐ a culture of shared responsibility and support;
- ☐ interaction of new and experienced teachers;
- ☐ a continuum of professional development;
- ☐ down-played assessment; and
- ☐ clearly defined goals.

The TEAM program proposed by bill 6686 reflects most, if not all, of these important criteria for success, and goes beyond. As designed, the TEAM program:

- ☐ promotes both collaboration among, and appropriate accountability by, the State Department of Education, the regional education service centers (RESCs), local districts, schools, and individual teachers;
- ☐ builds on CT's standards for effective teaching and university pre-service teacher preparation;
- ☐ involves teachers at the local level in designing and implementing their district's individual mentoring program....a task teachers have indicated to CEA they want to be involved in;
- ☐ will create standards for the TEAM program that all district plans will be required to meet, resulting in more consistent mentoring across the state;
- ☐ will provide mentors and new teachers with concrete tools (through the use of mentoring modules) specifically designed to address the identified, developmental needs of a new teacher;
- ☐ will become part of the local district professional development program, not an add-on for mentors and new teachers;



- will require new teachers to describe how they have grown through use of the mentoring modules, and how that growth has impacted their teaching.

One of the most important and attractive features of the proposed TEAM program is that it will help districts develop the capacity to create positive change in the district in two ways:

First, training teachers and administrators to develop committees that work effectively and design mentor programs that meet state standards and district, school, and individual teacher needs builds leadership skills among the staff. These skills can then be used in other arenas of school improvement.

Second, the TEAM program is designed as a strong professional development program that contains five characteristics that help build capacity for change:

1. program coherence - TEAM links the professional development activities for new teachers and mentors to district and school goals;
2. program content - TEAM modules focus on helping new teachers build skills, apply the skills in their classrooms through subject content, and promotes a stronger study of how the new teacher teaches a particular subject;
3. active learning - TEAM will provide a variety of learning activities for new teachers to participate in, as well as allow them to design learning activities as part of their growth plans;
4. intense and sustained over time - TEAM will allow new teachers to address their greatest needs in more depth and over a two-year period of time;
5. active involvement of teachers - TEAM is designed to bring about strong collaboration between new teachers and their mentors, and among teachers throughout the district as they design, implement, and evaluate the mentor program.

The TEAM program is exactly what it says it is....a team effort to support new teachers. We've learned a lot over the past 20 years, and passing bill 6686 is our best bet for helping new teachers grow, develop, and remain in the profession. I urge you to fully support this bill and the positive benefits it will bring to teachers and students in Connecticut.

Thank you.